



Special Events Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

October 7, 2015

1. Overview of Ad Hoc Committee Role
2. Public Comments
 - Dan Schiavone, Bluemont Board Member
 - Others
3. Review of Draft Recommendations
4. Set schedule for subsequent meetings – previously proposed October 21 at 8 a.m. in City Hall.



Special Events Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

Minutes

September 24, 2015

Attending: Cory Garman Committee Chair, Scott Dawson OTDB Chair, Mark Lore Promotions Committee Chair, Christine Germeyer, Jennifer Bell Downtown Manager, (Derek Gomes)

1. Review Committee Observations – Corey reviewed the importance of events and noted some of the opportunities created by events and the usefulness of the committee observations. Mark emphasized the importance of the mission and vision for the events. Look at the scope and ask does every event that we do really achieve the goals. Scott noted his observations. Cory asked what we want to recommend to the City – what is the mission of the OT events?
2. Develop document of recommendations (Scope of Work or Deliverables) to the City regarding development of an RFP – ML asked whether we want to have a contract 90% organizing events and whether the number of events should be reduced. He was open to having private organizers do more. The RFP could focus on community events that otherwise would not happen like Kidzfest. He expressed concerns that current events under the contract are not bringing the diversity he desires. He recommended more events like Ag Day and Celebracion. Discussion continued regarding developing recommendations occasionally focusing on current events. Jennifer Bell noted the importance of the committee in developing recommendations for the scope of work or deliverables that they would like the City to produce through the RFP process. There was some discussion about events being less music focused and less expensive to conduct. There was also a discussion about the role of sponsorship and money in developing events. Mark Lore highlighted that the current contract was to create events and that this group must answer the questions what is next.
3. Set schedule for subsequent meetings – Jennifer requested two future meeting dates be determined. The committee discussed the desirability in attracting more people to the meeting and that most downtown retail and restaurants are closed at 8 a.m. so an early meeting might enable more businesses owners to attend. The next meeting was set for October 7 at 8 a.m. in City Hall. A tentative future meeting was set for October 21 at 8 a.m. with the expectation that this time/date might need to be altered.



Special Events Ad Hoc Committee

Submitted Public Comments

Drew Van Laeken

Incredible Flying Objects

I believe the Friday Night Live Events have been a success for my business and for Old Town as a whole. After we spoke I went thru my sales numbers for the summer, and the Friday Night Live Events have made a significant impact on my business.

My June 19th sales were only average for the month (it may have rained), but for July 17 and August 21 we had sales increases of 37% and 40% respectively.

I love the positive comments from my customers and the increase in foot traffic, not just on the days of the events, but on average days here on the old mall. I am located in the center of the mall so these events are essential to my business, it's how people learn about my store and products.

I am appreciative of the work Full Circle Marketing has done and have nothing but positive things to say about Dario and his team. They are always willing to work with me if I have any concerns.

We also have done really well during some of the other events.

Especially Kids Fest and Rockin' Independence Eve.

I have only been at this location since February 2012 but I have lived in Winchester since 1989 and remember how dead it was down here on the old mall. These past three years, since the mall renovation, things have really turned around down here and I hope we can keep things going in a positive direction. I would hate to see us go backwards and lose some of these great events.

Todd Lungren

Tech Team Solutions

I have submitted support for this in the recent past. I stand by my earlier comments. I can also tell you that without Full Circles hard work and dedication continuing as the Special Event Contractor I will not be sponsoring or supporting an event next year.

If there is another contractor making an attempt to take on these events, I myself would sit back and watch for a year and then re-evaluate.

You better stick with what you know and be glad you've got it.

Kimberly Drunagel

Old Town General Store

My husband and I own 2 businesses on the Mall and love all of the events that are held downtown. We feel Full Circle is doing a great job and hope you keep them for future events. We don't feel anyone else would work as tirelessly as Dario goes.

Lauri Bridgeforth

Full Frame Photography

I understand that the OTDB is gathering opinions and data to make a recommendation to city council regarding events in Old Town. Having been a member of the OTDB for 6 years, 2 of them as your chair, I've watched and assisted as our downtown has evolved into something really fabulous, and can offer a unique and detailed perspective.

I support Dario's efforts, as well as his staff and Full Circle Marketing. It was during my transition to OTDB chair, and my tenure there, that the events took shape and were first executed. He's done an outstanding job of creating a really amazing "something" out of absolutely nothing. I remember his first year when Jennifer was worried about the lagging sponsorship dollars, explaining then that businesses didn't necessarily want to latch themselves to events that no one knew anything about. I told her then to just sit tight, let him create some momentum, and that the sponsorship dollars would follow. I think I can now say "you heard it here first". We all know the meals taxes have increased, and that at least some of it, if not most, can be attributed to our events. (I wish we could track the sales taxes—that's an important component. Ann Burkholder and I had several conversations about how to back into those numbers for the primary and secondary districts, but the city just doesn't have the software to do it. Yet.)

There are a few points about his contract, however, that in my opinion, should be re-written. There is no mention of the OTDB specifically, only that the Downtown Manager is the contract administrator. The contract is between the City of Winchester and Full Circle Marketing, which rendered the OTDB to the sidelines of the game, if not outside the fence. It was this point that incensed several of us board members, but it was presented as a "done deal".

WHY is the OTDB required to absorb a retainer on a contract that doesn't even include them as an entity? That, my friends, is NOT right, and should be re-written. (Please don't misunderstand—I'm NOT saying Dario doesn't deserve the retainer—he earns every penny. I'm questioning which budget it's paid from, that's all.)

The other issue involves profit proceeds. I was told verbally by the previous city manager that eventual profit proceeds (percentages) would be flowing back into the OTDB's budget, which theoretically would soften the blow of the retainer cost. This has not occurred, nor can I find it in writing anywhere that it was set up this way, but that is what I was told, perhaps as a gesture of appeasement. Instead, said proceeds are returning to the city's general fund, which I realize fronts the money for event expenses. But again, if the general fund is being used for ebb and flow, and the events contract doesn't involve the OTDB except that the DM is the contract admin, why is the retainer in that budget—why not pull the retainer from the general fund as well? This one gesture would free up close to HALF of the OTDB's budget to do other things to support downtown.

OTDB Special Event Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations – Draft - 10/6/15

OTDB Vision:

To be a vibrant and inclusive Main Street community that combines small-town charm and big-city opportunity and is nationally recognized as a desirable place to work, live, and thrive.

OTDB Mission:

The OTDB inspires community involvement, fosters economic vitality, encourages creativity and entrepreneurship, and attracts residents, visitors, and investors to Old Town Winchester.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this OTDB Ad Hoc Committee is to make recommendations to help inform City staff in the creation of a RFP for a Special Events Organizer and Promoter. The intent of this recommendation is to refine and improve upon the existing events program. The goals of Old Town events are to bring people to Old Town, to create a sense of place, to enhance the brand, and to create partnerships with local groups and businesses.

Methodology

Committee members researched publicly funded events programs in ten different communities: Front Royal, VA; Staunton, VA; Harrisonburg, VA; Charlottesville, VA; Waterford, VA; Hampton, VA; Norfolk, VA; Lebanon, NH; St. Augustine, FL; Lititz, PA. The Committee reviewed these findings, along with contract templates, official documents, as well as accounts from verbal conversations. After two meetings discussing the research materials the Committee determined the next step in the process was to draft a document summarizing recommendations for the future RFP.

Summary of Findings

The members of the Committee agree that events are an important part of the success and growth of Old Town. We believe the events programs should continue, and should be periodically adjusted for the greater benefit of Old Town. The initial RFP for Special Events Contractor focused primarily on the creation of events for Old Town Winchester. After a period of three years, the goal of a vibrant and active downtown has been realized. This achievement has been reached not only through city funded programs, but also through events generated by community and private organizations. As such, the new RFP and events contract should restructure the duties of the Contract to focus more on providing support and marketing for both public and privately organized/funded events. All events reflect upon the quality of the Old Town experience, and contribute to the vitality of Old Town. It is imperative that all City approved events support the mission and vision of the OTDB.

The majority of communities that we surveyed operate events with a non-profit business model, which often is not funded by a special tax assessment. None of these examples had an effective method for gauging the overall success of events or their impact on local businesses. As this outcome is difficult to measure, greater importance should be placed on the direct involvement of Old Town stakeholders. There should be events that focus on retail and shopping downtown. There should be events that focus on dining downtown. There should be events that focus on living downtown. The current schedule

largely focuses on alcohol and music themed events that target a mostly white audience between the ages of 20-50. The new RFP needs to require events that appeal to the black, Asian, and Latino residents as well as the "Creative Class" which figures so prominently in our brand.

The following items should be considered for the future Special Events Contractor RFP:

1. Planning sessions with event contractor for events including brainstorming, logistics meetings, and development meetings.
2. Develop and manage events budgets with OTDB.
3. Clear definitions for use of funds regarding fees and sponsorship
 - a. Fee covers cost of contractor
 - b. Sponsorship covers the cost of the event
 - i. Fundraising should be limited to cost, **not** profit.
4. Increased public participation and partnership with **Community Organizations**
 - a. Events hosted by community organization and charities similar to Harrisonburg
 - b. Give stakeholders ownership, support **OTWBA** and Winchester **Main Street** events
5. Definition of specific staffing and man-hours per project
 - a. Adequate staffing and volunteers are the **responsibility** of contractor
6. Evaluation of contract is built into **language** of contract, **with** clauses to withhold payment.
 - a. Establish a model for **deliverables** and accountability
7. More daytime events on Saturdays and Sundays; 11:00-6:00
8. Evening events with music, food, or alcohol themes should not extend past 8:00 pm
9. Schedule city events **around** holidays
10. More events and **marketing** for retail
11. Placement of portable restrooms **must** not be **near** restaurants or food vendors
12. City events should not **occur** in **direct** competition with community events.
13. Certain events should be **made available** to the other contractors, or sub-contractors.
 - a. **Friday Night Live**
14. The **creation** of events or programs during the **winter** months and early spring.
15. City **guide** and policy for **event** organizers and contractors to establish standards and maintain quality
16. Further **development** of post-event evaluation, financial reporting, and strategic event/marketing plan.
17. Remove events from the schedule that do not support OTDB mission or are not sustainable.